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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses dynamics of educational systems that can influence professional development. It begins by suggesting that adjusting education systems to support sustained, high-quality professional development for all teachers can be compared to developing dynamic, passionate orchestras whose productions touch their audiences and bring joy and energy to their members. The paper goes on to present descriptions of and questions to consider related to: philosophy, vision, and mission of professional development; professional development activities and impacts; collaboration; context and climate; leadership, politics, and power; teachers' association roles; communications (methods of engaging the public, teachers, students, and others in decisionmaking and learning); strategic plans and the planning process; state and local governmental and teachers' association policies; and resources. An appendix presents factors influencing the success of collaboration (environment, membership, process/structure, communication, purpose, and resources). (SM)

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DYNAMICS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AFFECTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From the Evaluation of the
National Foundation for the Improvement of Education's
***A Change of Course* Initiative**

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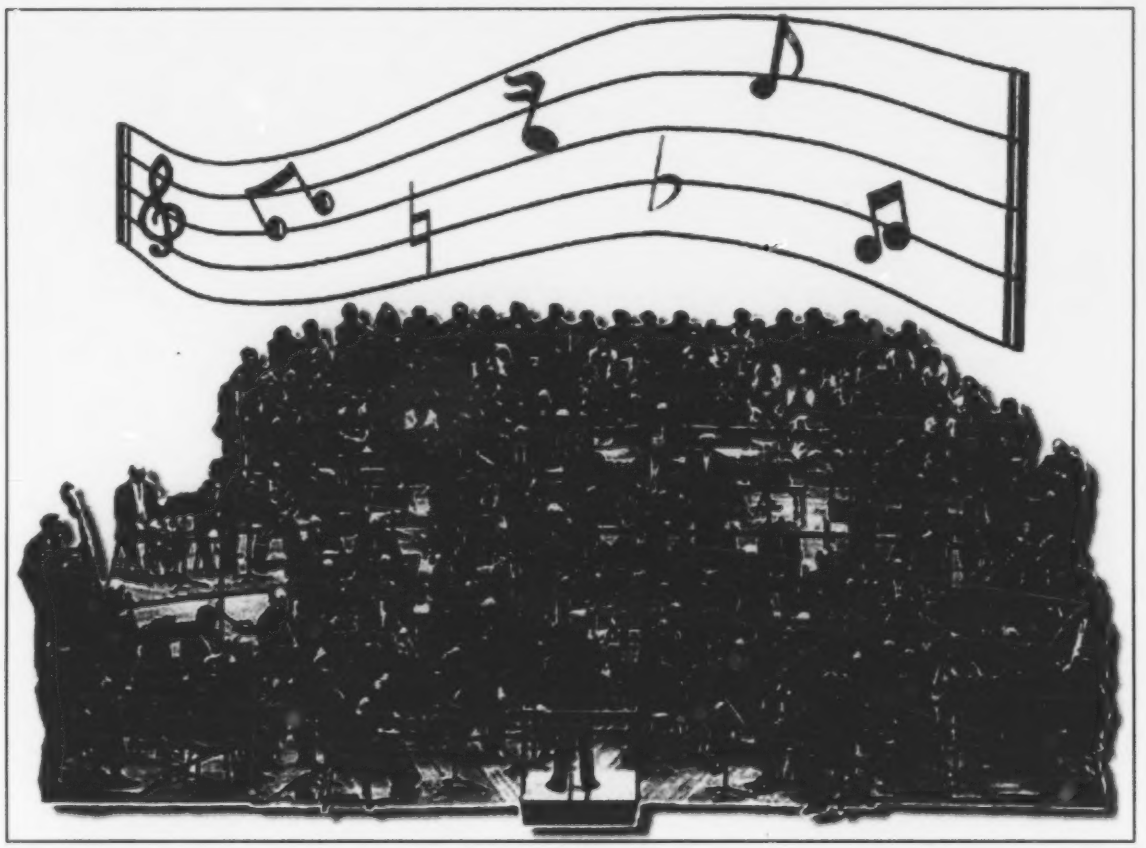
Orchestra Analogy

Adjusting education systems to support sustained high-quality professional development for all teachers can be compared to developing dynamic, passionate orchestras whose productions touch their audiences and bring joy and energy to their members. (For a more complete presentation, see InSites' web page at http//:www.InSites.org.)

Orchestra and Score



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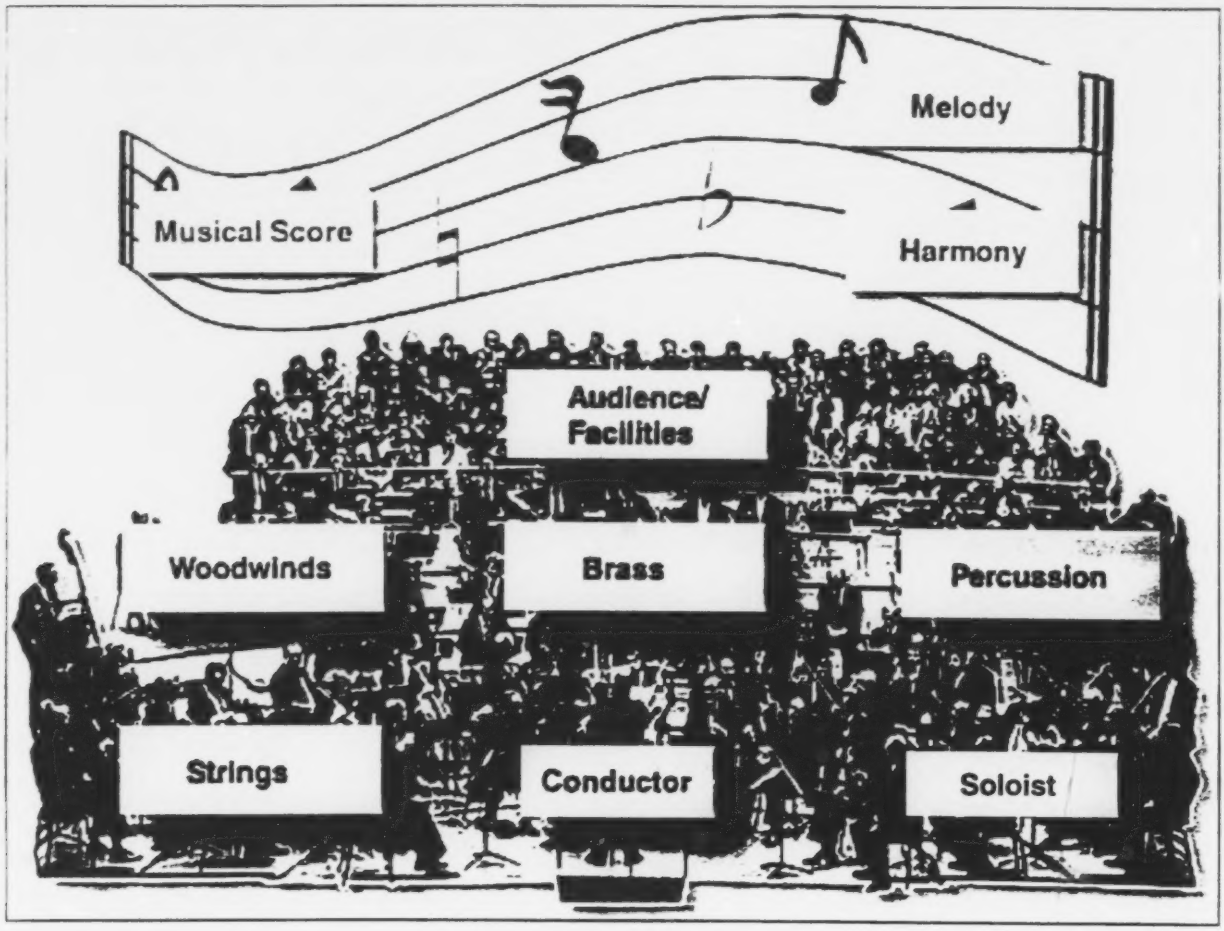
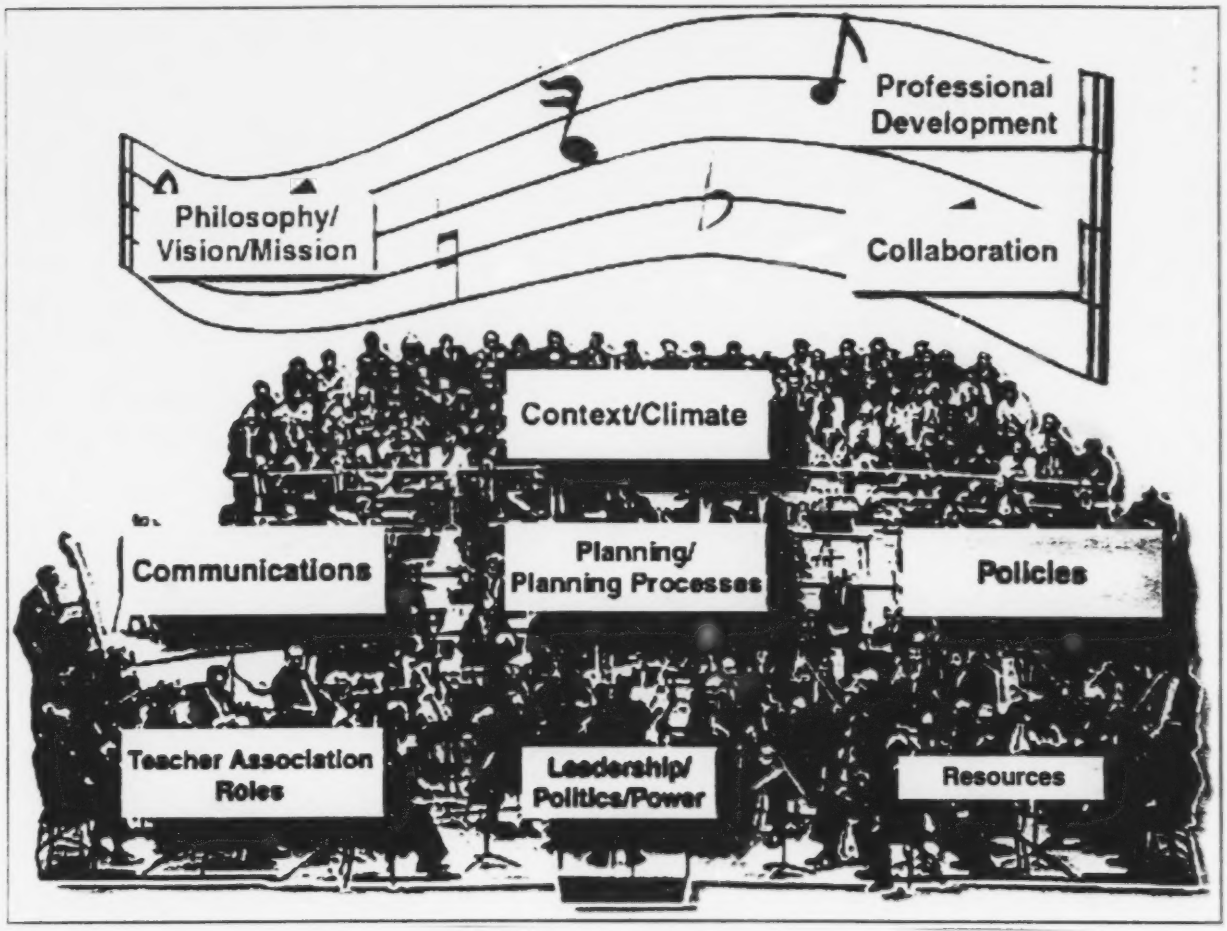
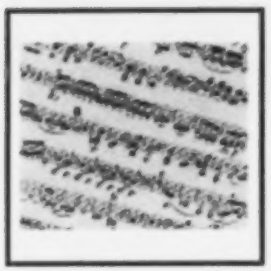
Orchestra, Score, with Musical Labels



Orchestra, Score, with System Dynamics Labels



Philosophy, Vision, Mission

Description

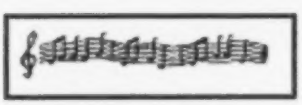
The philosophy, vision, and mission or purpose of professional development establishes the essential nature of the professional development to be created and promoted in the situation.

Questions to Consider

1 What philosophy, vision, and mission concerning professional development for teachers currently are dominant in our situation?

2 What would we like the current dominant philosophy, vision, and mission for teacher professional development to be? *(In your statements, include reference to scale, i.e., reaching greater numbers of teachers, and to the sustainability of high-quality professional development over the long-term.)*

3 Where are existing pockets of strong commitment to the desired philosophy, vision, and/or mission upon which we can build?



Professional Development Activities and Impacts

Description

The heart of your work is the actual professional development experiences that reach teachers and are sustained over time. Both the activities themselves and their impacts, especially on students, are considered in this category. Some activities may be available to all teachers while others are specialized for, say, all mathematics teachers. Some may be designed at a district level while schools or individual teachers design others. They may vary in the methodology from one-day workshops to long-term mentoring and coaching processes.

Questions to Consider

1. What professional development activities are we focused on for this initiative?
2. Do we have mechanisms to show the link between teachers' professional development and impact on student learning?
3. Do we need to make changes in the scope, content, and/or pedagogy of these activities?

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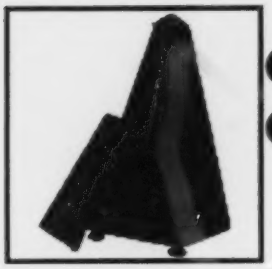
Collaboration

Description

"Collaboration" is used in a generic sense to encompass any type of joint work from loose connections to very strong ones. The collaboration may be at the organizational level (e.g., between districts, teachers' associations, and universities) or the individual level (e.g., between the district superintendent and the association president). They may be between groups or individuals within the education system or with outsiders to the system. Collaborations play many roles including building connections between groups that can contribute to a goal, generating new ways of thinking, and personal and professional support for innovation and change. Personal commitment to collaboration is a crucial factor.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the systems (e.g., higher education, an individual school, a district, a state) that we are seeking to change?
2. What other systems will affect the target system's ability to change?
3. What is the relationship of our grant partners to the systems and system dynamics we seek to influence?
4. How can NFIE be a key collaborator with us?
5. What additional collaborators do we need and why?
6. What characteristics of effective collaboration are in place in our situation? Which need more development? (See Reference A: Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration., p. 30.)



Context, Climate

Description

The influx of technology, shifting economic conditions, changing demographics, and historical patterns of change are examples of important contextual factors. The basic demographics of your situation—numbers of teachers, students, and schools; rural, urban, suburban; age and background of teachers; conservative or liberal tendencies of the community; ethnic make-up—are important.

Questions to Consider

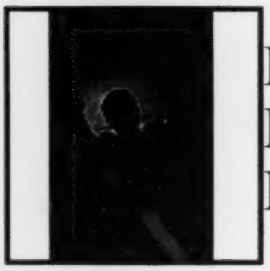
1. What is the typical tempo or rate of change in our situation?
2. Who is usually involved in change efforts such as the one we are undertaking?
3. What is the typical rhythm of change (i.e., do we typically engage in sporadic, continuous, or breakpoint change?
4. What major trends (e.g., technology, economic conditions, research trends, and diversity in student population) are present in our situation that may affect our work?
5. How much variation in implementation of new practices is acceptable/desirable? (For example, a new professional development activity may need to have the same goals for all teachers but the amount of time and method of learning may vary across schools.)
6. At what phase of change are we? Consider the following phases:

   Phase 1 – Exploration. We are exploring the types of professional development that are appropriate to put in place.

   Phase 2 – Transition. We have selected professional development approaches and have them quite well developed. We are now making major changes in other parts of the system (e.g., in policy) to make the new approaches last.

   Phase 3 – Broad Based Application. We are in the final stages of solidifying our approach(es) while starting to develop additional ones or build more solid connections among several existing approaches that are philosophically congruent.

   (You may be in different phases on different aspects of the work.)



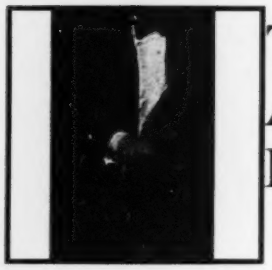
Leadership, Politics, Power

Description

Issues of leadership, politics, and power are important features of the change process. They are especially important as sites embed new policies and practices (often affecting resource allocations) in their education system.

Questions to Consider

1. Where is the current leadership for our professional development emphasis?
2. Who can create incentives or disincentives for this work?
3. What additional leadership is essential?
4. What are the major political issues that we need to take into account?
5. What are the power dynamics that are important to consider?
6. What roles might outside leaders (e.g., NFIE) play that would be helpful?



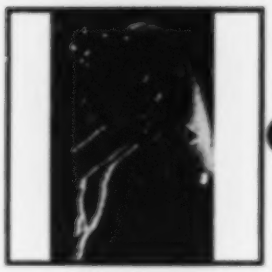
Teachers' Association Roles

Description

Teachers associations are especially important in providing leadership and developing understanding and commitment among their members to support sustained high-quality professional development for all teachers.

Questions to Consider

1. What role is the local teachers' association playing related to our professional development focus?
2. What additional roles would we like the local teachers' association to play?
3. What roles are the state and/or national teachers' associations playing related to our professional development focus?
4. What additional roles would we like the state and/or national teachers' associations to play?



Communications

Description

Communications include methods of engaging the public, teachers, students, and others in decision-making and learning. The methods might include regularly scheduled surveys, committee participation, forums, etc. Electronic networks, written materials, TV, and other means of communications are involved.

Questions to Consider

1. What communications are needed to and from whom, and for what purpose, related to our professional development focus?
2. When are two-way (or multi-way) communications appropriate rather than one-way communications?
3. To what extent are people involved in our grant work linked electronically?

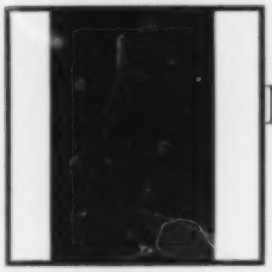
Plans, Planning Processes

Description

Strategic planning processes are especially important vehicles for making change. They can incorporate the many facets of the work—attention to time, school improvement, partnerships, professional development, public engagement, induction, evaluation, and more.

Questions to Consider

1. What strategic plans and planning processes are now in place upon which we can/should build?
2. Who currently participates in these processes?
3. What other plans, planning processes, and/or levels of participation are needed to support our NFIE work?



Policies

Description

State and local governmental and teachers' association policies related to resource allocations, licensure requirements, student and teacher standards, performance evaluation, and strategic planning are especially important. The degree of policy flexibility, the distribution of power, negotiated agreements between associations and governing bodies, how and when policy is circumvented, how money is actually spent, and other features of policy all may be significant.

Questions to Consider

1. What current policies are congruent with our desired direction?
2. What congruent policies need greater enforcement?
3. What current policies are counter to our desired direction?
4. What current policies need to be eliminated or waived?
5. How are new policies generally formulated in our situation? (Consider the influential points in the policy development process.)

Resources

Description

Typically the test of whether the above areas are taken seriously is the extent to which both time and money are allocated to support the goals, vision, and philosophy as well as specific activities.

Questions to Consider

1. What changes are needed in the allocation of teacher, student, and/or administrator time?
2. What changes are needed in the allocation of financial resources?
3. What low priority activities can be eliminated to free up time and resources for new goals?

Other

Description

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

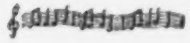
Questions to Consider

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Philosophy, Vision, Mission

Features

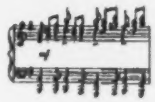
- Learning community - job embedded learning
- Teacher-student learning link
- Teacher-determined learning
- Safe environment for learning
- Respect for teachers
- Evolving



Professional Development Activities and Impacts

Features

- Relevant
- Impact = High quality teaching and learning
- Measurement - rubrics; qualitative, quantitative
- Impact = Teacher retention



Collaboration

Features

- District - teachers' association
- District - teachers' association - university/PD Centers
- Other organizations
- Business
- Community

Climate, Context

Features

- Economic shifts
- Demographic shifts - teachers, students
- Teacher retirements
- Technological shifts
- * Historical patterns of change
- * Evolving

Leadership, Politics, Power

Features

- Bureaucratic to professional model
- Trust (distrust)
- Respect (disrespect)
- Stability (instability)
- Cross-role. collaborative
- Plans for continuity

Teachers' Association Roles

Features

- Bring members along
- State-local-national interaction
- Shape policy

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Communications

Features

- Surveys
- Task forces
- Support groups

Plans, Planning Processes

Features

- Strategic plans that integrate policies, practice
- School improvement plans
- Technology plans that emphasize professional development
- Personnel evaluation plans
- Curriculum plans

Policies

Features

- Student, teacher standards
- Licensure, re-certification
- Accountability for results
- Personnel appraisal
- Professional development time, money, support
- Balance/alignment of state, local policy
- Flexibility

Resources

Features

- Time
- Money
- Support

Notes:

Notes:

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Reference A – Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration[1]

Categories

1. Environment
2. Membership
3. Process/Structure
4. Communication
5. Purpose
6. Resources

Number of Studies that Identify the Factor

1. Factors Related to the ENVIRONMENT

✓✓✓✓✓✓ A. **History of collaboration or cooperation in the community.**
A history of collaboration or cooperation exists in the community and offers the potential collaborative partners an understanding of the roles and expectations required in collaboration and enables them to trust the process.

✓✓✓ B. **Collaborative group seen as a leader in the community.**
The collaborative group (and by implication, the agencies in the group) is perceived within the community as a leader – at least related to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish.

✓✓✓ C. **Political/social climate favorable.**
Political leaders, opinion-makers, persons who control resources, and the general public support (or at least do not oppose) the mission of the collaborative group.

2. Factors Related to MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ A. **Mutual respect, understanding, and trust.**
Members of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations: how they operate, their cultural norms and values, limitations, and expectations.

✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ B. **Appropriate cross-section of members.**
The collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community who will be affected by its activities.

✓✓✓✓✓✓ C. **Members see collaboration as in their self-interest.**
Collaborating partners believe the benefits of collaboration will offset costs such as loss of autonomy and "turf."

✓✓✓ D. **Ability to compromise.**
Collaborating partners are able to compromise, since the many decisions within a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit the preferences of every member perfectly.

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[1] From Mattessich, P. and B. Monsey (1992) *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Number of Studies that Identify the Factor

3. Factors Related to PROCESS/STRUCTURE

✓✓✓✓✓✓ A. **Members share a stake in both process and outcome.**
Members of a collaborative group feel "ownership" of both the way the group works and the results or product of its work.

✓✓✓✓✓✓ B. **Multiple layers of decision-making.**
Every level (upper management, middle management, operations) within each organization in the collaborative group participates in decision-making.

✓✓✓✓ C. **Flexibility.**
The collaborative group remains open to varied ways of organizing itself and accomplishing its work.

✓✓✓✓ D. **Development of clear roles and policy guidelines.**
The collaborating partners clearly understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities; and how to carry out those responsibilities.

✓✓✓ E **Adaptability.**
The collaborative group has the ability to sustain itself in the midst of major changes, even if it needs to change some major goals, members, etc., in order to deal with changing conditions.

4. Factors Related to COMMUNICATION

✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ A. **Open and frequent communication.**
Collaborative group members interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group.

✓✓✓✓✓ B. **Established informal and formal communication links.**
Channels of communication exist on paper, so that information flow occurs. In addition, members establish personal connections – producing a better, more informed, and cohesive group working on a common project.

Number of Studies that Identify the Factor

5. Factors Related to PURPOSE

✓✓✓✓✓ A. **Concrete, attainable goals and objectives.**
Goals and objectives of the collaborative group are clear to all partners.

✓✓✓✓ B. **Shared vision.**
Collaborating partners have the same vision, with clearly agreed upon mission, objectives and strategy. The shared vision may exist at the outset of collaboration; or the partners may develop a vision as they work together.

✓✓✓ C. **Unique purpose.**
The mission and goals or approach of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals or approach of the member organizations.

6. Factors Related to RESOURCES

✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ A. **Sufficient funds.**
The collaborative group has an adequate, consistent financial base to support its operations.

✓✓✓✓✓✓✓ B. **Skilled convener.**
The individual who convenes the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills, and carries out the role with fairness. Because of these characteristics (and others), the convener is granted respect or "legitimacy" from the collaborative partners.

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